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ABNETT

LANNING

LABAT

GARCIA

FORCE WORKS™

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

MOONRAKER'S PARADOX: "WELCOME TO NOWHERE!"

LABAT GARCIA 94

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

FORCE WORKS

THE HEX SHIP'S ENGINES FLAMED OUT AT TWO HUNDRED FEET, SLICING THE AIRSPEED DOWN TO SEVENTY KNOTS AND SKIPPING THE CRIPPLED SHIP THROUGH THE TREE COVER LIKE A **STONE**.

THEN THERE WAS A LONG, **GRINDING** IMPACT THAT LEFT A NINETY YARD SCAR OF **FELLED TREES** BEHIND IT.

THEN... **STILLNESS.** BROKEN ONLY BY THE EERIE WING-BEATS OF THINGS **HALF-SEEN** IN THE BRANCHES.

WELCOME to NOWHERE

INTO THE ABYSS WITH--

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EVERYONE OKAY?
FISHER?
YOU CAN LET GO OF THE CONTROLS NOW, FISHER.
FISHER! WE'VE LANDED!!
LANDED. RIGHT.
BUT ARE WE ALIVE?
THANKS TO YOU, BUDDY. YOU'RE ALMOST AS GOOD AT CRASHING AS AGENT. I WONDER IF WE'LL EVER ARRIVE ANYWHERE WITH THE SKIDS DOWN.
YOU OKAY, HON?
I'VE ADDED TO MY EXTENSIVE BRUISE COLLECTION, BUT OTHERWISE...
GRAB WHAT YOU NEED AND GET OUT! I DON'T WANT TO STAY ABOARD ANY LONGER THAN NECESSARY.
COMPUTER! SWITCH THE DATA-LOG TO PORTABLE FORMAT AND RELEASE.
AUTHORIZATION... CARPENTER ONE.
DATA-LOG RELEASED.
GRACIAS, COMPUTER.
THAT CLINCHES IT. THE MAIN POWER FEEDS HAVE BEEN SEVERED! THERE'S A SIGNIFICANT RISK OF POST-IMPACT FIRE!
LET'S MOVE WITH A PURPOSE, PEOPLE!
ZECHKAT

PLUG YOUR EARS... I'M BLOWING THE HATCH!

SHLNK-K-K-K

C'MON, WE'RE PERFECTLY SAFE. I SHOULD KNOW--I'M THE TECHSPERT HERE!

FLA-BOOM

FISHER!

Oh.

I'D LIKE MY CROW MEDIUM RARE, PLEASE.

THIS'S YOUR FIRST TIME OUT, FISHER, SO I'LL GO EASY, BUT...

DON'T WORRY, WANDA. YOU'RE THE BOSS. I'M THE GRUNT. I'LL BEHAVE FROM NOW ON.

TRY FLAMBÉED.

WANDA? THE DATA-LOG WON'T GIVE ME ANY LOCATION READINGS. WE MUST BE OUT OF RANGE OF THE G.P.S. AND THE WORKS UPLINK!

I'M ALSO READING HIGH BACKGROUND CLUTTER FROM TEMPORAL ENERGY FORMS!

MOONRAKER TO WORKS, VENTURA.

WE'RE IN A RADIO DEAD SPOT, TOO.

LOOKS LIKE WE'RE RUNNING SOLO UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

CREEP CITY, huh? NO INSECTS, NO BIRDS,.. JUST THIS CLAMMY, HUMID, STILLNESS.

THIS LOOK ANYTHING LIKE THAT VIETNAM?

NOT ONE BIT.

LET'S MOVE OUT. GET OUR BEARINGS.

AND NO SINGING.

HI HOOO! HI HO! HI HO--

GOTCHA. SORRY.

ELSEWHERE...

FIRE. TWO MILES DISTANT.

INTERESTING.

ENABLE YOUR WEAPONS. WE WILL INVESTI-GATE THIS.

BRING HIM ALONG.

TIME'S A-WASTING!

WHAT ABOUT THE BOY, LORD? HIS TURNING IS NOT YET COMPLETE.

WORKS H.Q., CALIFORNIA...

...YOU'RE SOMETHING ELSE, MS. CHANEY...

...YOU WEREN'T HERE! I WAS THE ONE U.S. AGENT AND HIS MYSTERIOUS ALLY COLD-COCKED ON THEIR WAY OUT OF HERE WITH HAWK-EYE!

WE'RE NOT GOING TO GET ANYWHERE IF YOU PERSIST IN SHOUTING AT ME, CYBER-MANCER!

MY APOLOGIES, AMANDA... I'M A LITTLE WOUND UP. I HATE THE FACT THAT I'VE BEEN ON THE TEAM ONLY TWENTY FOUR HOURS AND I'VE ALREADY SCREWED UP.

I DON'T WANT IRON MAN TO REGRET SELECTING ME FOR FORCE WORKS.

I'M SURE HE WON'T, SUZI. NOW THERE'S ONLY YOU, ME AND RACHEL HERE, SO WE'D BETTER PULL TOGETHER!

YOU SAY YOU'VE NO IDEA WHO THIS ARMORED MAN WAS WHO HELPED AGENT SPRING HAWKEYE?

NONE AT ALL.

PLATO! ANY JOY IN RAISING THE PEGASUS TEAM YET?

NEGATIVE, AMANDA CHANEY. NO CONTACT HAS BEEN POSSIBLE SINCE THE HEX SHIP DROPPED OFF MY SCREENS.

KEEP TRYING, PLEASE REPEAT PATTERN.

IT'S LOOKING BAD, ISN'T IT AMANDA?

"BAD" IS AN UNDER-STATEMENT.

SHOULD I TRY AND CONTACT IRON MAN?

YES... DO IT! AND THE AVENGERS! PRIORITY DIRECT LINK! WE'VE WASTED ENOUGH TIME!

TELL THEM WE'VE LOST CONTACT WITH THE MAIN TEAM, AND INFORM THEM OF THE ACTION TAKEN BY U.S. AGENT.

PLATO! DISPLAY ALL THE DATA YOU HAVE ON THE LAST KNOWN LOCATION OF THE PEGASUS!

THEY WERE INBOUND TOWARD CAMBODIA, ENTERING THE CHAOS HOT-SPOT DETECTED BY MOON-RAKER.

MOONRAKER REFERRED TO THIS AREA AS 'VIETNAM' I HAVE NO REC-ORD OF SUCH A LOCATION.

I'VE HEARD OF IT.

NOT NOW, RACHEL!

WAITAMINUTE! WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?!

VIETNAM. I'VE HEARD OF IT. LEARNED ABOUT IT IN SCHOOL.

'COURSE NO ONE EVER ASKS ME ANYTHING!

I'M ASKING NOW, KIDDO.

VIETNAM IS A COUNTRY. IT'S IN MY ENCYLCOPEDIA.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK.

SUZI? SHAKE YOUR TAILFEATHERS AND CONTACT IRON MAN!

YES, MA'AM.

SHE ALWAYS LIKE THIS, PLATO?

LIKE WHAT SUZI ENDO?

NEVER MIND.

SUNDOWN, THE DESERT BEYOND CALEXICO.

THE OLD MESA VIENTO AIRSTRIP, EMPTY THESE TWENTY YEARS...

NOW, THOUGH, SLEEK STEEL BIRDS ROOST IN THE SUN-BAKED HANGARS...

...AND IN THE ABANDONED OFFICE, VOICES BREAK THE TWENTY YEAR SILENCE.

YOU WERE ACCUSED OF *MURDER*, CLINT. WE COULDN'T STAND BY AND WATCH YOU GO DOWN FOR SOMETHING WE *KNOW* YOU WOULD NEVER DO.

I CHECKED OUT WHAT I COULD WHEN AGENT FIRST CONTACTED ME. THE VIDEO AND FORENSIC EVIDENCE AGAINST YOU IS *DAMNING*... BUT I'D STAKE MY *LIFE* ON IT BEING *FABRICATED*.

FABRICATED BY SOME-ONE WITH THE *BRILLIANCE* AND *EXPERTISE* TO MAKE IT WHOLLY *CONVINCING*.

NOT *YOUR* FAULT, HAWK. YOU DIDN'T *ASK* FOR ANY OF THIS...

...GOT *YOU ALL* IN A PRETTY FIX, AIN'T I?

WHATEVER... BUT I WANT TO THANK YOU GUYS FOR STICKING BY ME... JIM, AGENT, WIDOW...

THAT MAY BE SO, JIM... BUT I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE...

NONE OF US CAN, WIDOW... BUT THE PIECES *FIT*.

AGENT'S *RIGHT*.

IT'S *STARK*.

I DON'T KNOW *HOW*, AND I SURE AS HECK DON'T KNOW *WHY*... BUT IT *MUST* BE.

SOMEWHERE ELSE...

IT'S A HIVE, A NEST, A COCOON OF TECHNOLOGY WRAPPED AROUND THE SINGLE LIFE INSIDE.

THE MOST PRIVATE RETREAT IN THE WORLD. A SANCTUARY FROM THE PETTY, PALTRY SQUABBLINGS OF MANKIND.

THERE IS NO MORE TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED PLACE ANYWHERE. NOT FOUR FREEDOMS PLAZA, NOT LATVERIA, NOT EVEN THE SHI'AR DERIVED WONDERS OF THE X-MANSION.

DECODE AND DISPLAY THE DATA SQUIRT ON MAIN SCREEN.

Hawkeye - Barton, Clint
Removed from Force Works/Ventura
Custody at 18.43
Removal affected by U.S. Agent – Walker, John
And unidentified accomplice
Current location confirmed as desert region
30 KM northwest of Calexico

LINK ME WITH TACTICAL DEPLOYMENT.

link secure

REQUEST AUTHORIZATION TO DEPLOY A SANCTION TEAM.

It is regrettable that such overt action needs to be taken before disclosure

DO I HAVE AUTHORI-ZATION?

Authorization granted
Strike team decimal
four en route
Maximum sanction approved

...BUT IT WAS HERE!

IT REALLY WAS!!

C'MON, RACHEL... CALM DOWN.

ARE YOU SURE THIS IS THE RIGHT BOOK?

YES! YES! I REMEMBER TRACING THE MAP INTO MY SCHOOL BOOK. YOU BELIEVE ME, DON'T YOU?

I THINK IT'S THIS PLACE! I THINK FORCE WORKS IS... IS HAUNTED!

THINGS KEEP APPEARING AND THEN DISAPPEARING ALL THE TIME!

SLOW DOWN! WHAT DO YOU MEAN... HAUNTED?

ABSOLUTELY. CROSS MY HEART.

THERE MUST BE SOME EXPLANATION. HOW DOES AN ENTIRE COUNTRY DISAPPEAR?

HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED THAT STUFF HAPPENS AROUND HERE? THINGS MOVE WHEN YOU'RE NOT LOOKING? YESTERDAY, MY WATCH RAN BACKWARDS!

AND I PULLED THE PLUG ON MY BATH SUNDAY NIGHT, AND WHEN I CAME BACK, IT WAS FULL AGAIN!

AND THERE'S MOONRAKER. EVERYONE ACTS LIKE THEY KNOW HIM REALLY WELL... BUT I NEVER SAW HIM UNTIL YESTER-DAY!

Oh, C'MON, RACHEL! I WANT TO BELIEVE YOU, BUT THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH OL' AMANDA CAN SWALLOW!

SLADE'S BEEN AROUND FOR... FOR...

omigod.

I-I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT HIM JOINING THE TEAM!

WHY HAVE WE STOPPED?
I DON'T KNOW. WHY ARE YOU WHISPERING?
I... UM... NO REASON.
MOONRAKER? WHAT'S THE HOLD UP?
SLADE? WHAT IS IT?
AGAPHAUR.
IT'S HERE. IT'S HERE.
GOD HELP ME... IT'S AGAPHAUR!
HOW CAN THIS BE?!
SLADE! WAIT!!
SLADE?
EASY! EASY!
LUA-THE FIRE... KHRULL. THIS IS THE PLACE...
oh, god... I REMEMBER IT ALL...
WHAT PLACE, SLADE?
SLADE? MY NAME'S NOT SLADE...
IT'S GUSTAV.

THERE THEY ARE!

BY THE *CONQUEROR!* I THOUGHT WE WERE ON THE TRAIL OF SOME MORE *POSITIVES*-- BUT *NO*...

THESE ARE *AVENGERS!*

THIS WILL NOT DO. NOT DO AT *ALL*. CONTROL WILL BE MOST DISPLEASED TO LEARN HUMANS SUCH AS *THESE* HAVE ENTERED THE ZONE.

PREPARE YOURSELVES FOR COMBAT. ATTUNE YOUR BODY-SYSTEMS TO THE HIGH-EST LEVEL.

THESE HUMANS MUST NOT LEAVE HERE *ALIVE*.

YOU--STAY HERE IN COVER. GUARD THE BOY. MINISTER TO HIS *TURNING* IF ANOTHER SPASM TAKES HIM.

THE REST OF YOU-- *WITH ME!*

IN THE NAME OF THE *SACRED STREAM*, WE HAVE ENEMIES TO *BREAK!*

SLADE... PLEASE! TALK TO ME! SAY SOMETHING!

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU?

BLAST! I WISH WE'D TAKEN TRUMAN'S LAST EPISODE MORE SERIOUSLY.

HE'S EXHIBITING CLASSIC SCHIZOTYPAL BEHAVIOR...

HOW CAN YOU BE SO CLINICAL? I LOVE THIS MAN! I NEED TO HELP HIM!!

JULIA! PLEASE! I MEANT NOTHING BY IT! I'M AS WORRIED FOR HIM AS YOU ARE!

OH, LADIES...

I THINK WE'RE IN T-ROUBLE!

NO QUARTER! NO MERCY!!

EXTERMINATE THEM!!

SHRIKK

FOOM

EVERYONE! FIND COVER! SCATTER!

CHP-THOM

Oh, SWELL.

LIKE I'M REALLY QUALIFIED FOR THIS KIND OF A SPANDEX-FEST!

CANNON! VOICE COMMAND! CONCUSSION ROUND! RAPID FIRE!!

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THAT MAKE? THEY ARE TRYING TO KILL US!

WE'VE GOT TO KEEP THEM AWAY FROM SLADE! HE'S DEFENSE-LESS!

KRRAK

WHADDA-Y'KNOW!!

I ACED TH' SON OF A--

UGNNFF!!

THESE WARRIORS! THEY'RE THE SAME AS THE ONES WHO ATTACKED US AT AVENGERS MANSION!

Whuk

YOU! I KNOW YOU!

FROM AVENGERS FILES... YOU'RE...

...APOCRYPHUS!

...LUA... I'M SORRY...

LUA...

KNOWLEDGE YOU WILL TAKE TO THE GRAVE, SCARLET ONE!!

Whh-

KRAKK

AGHH--

KZZAPP

MY MASTER'S ACTIVITIES...

mmff!

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, APOCRYPHUS? IS THIS YOUR MASTER'S DOING?

...ARE NO CONCERN OF YOURS NOW.

WORKS, VENTURA...

...TRUMAN, SLADE... OPERATIONAL NAME *MOON-RAKER.*

FIRST ENCOUNTER DURING THE *D.A.E.M.O.N. CONSPIRACY* IN NANTUCKET, OCTOBER 1994. ACQUITTED HIM-SELF WITH MERIT DURING THAT OPERATION.

SERVED AS A PROBATIONER FOR TWO MONTHS, THEN AWARDED FULL TEAM STATUS.

HAS BEEN AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF FORCE WORKS FROM CHRIST-MAS '94 TO DATE.

IN WORK.

INTERESTING. PRELIMINARY SCANS SHOW A HIGH LEVEL OF *TEMPORAL RADIATION* CONTAMINATING THE BUILDING...

I CANNOT SAY HOW LONG THIS HAS BEEN THE CASE.

THAT'S *NONSENSE!*

I'M SORRY, AMANDA. THE RECORDS ARE QUITE SPECIFIC.

I KNOW THEY ARE, PLATO. I EVEN *REMEMBER* IT ALL... BUT NOT *PROPERLY.*

YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO WAKE UP AND HALF REMEMBER A DREAM? *OH, NO--YOU WOULDN'T* WOULD YOU?

CAN WE TRACE THE CONTAMINATION SOURCE? GIVE ME A FULL SCHEMATIC OF THE WORKS ON THE MAIN SCREEN.

OKAY. LET'S SEE...

WAIT A MINUTE. WHAT'S *THAT?*

THE SUB-BASEMENT LEVEL.

THE WHA--? FIRST *I'VE* HEARD OF IT! MUST BE A MILE DOWN! WHY DON'T I KNOW ABOUT IT!

I COULDN'T SPECULATE ON THE OPERATION OF YOUR COG-NITIVE POWERS, AMANDA.

TAKE MY WORD FOR IT, IT'S LIKE *THAT.* LIKE I'VE WOKE UP AND CAN CLEARLY REMEMBER THINGS I KNOW *NEVER ACTUALLY HAPPENED!*

COULD YOU RUN A DIAGNOSTIC ON THE BUILDING AND SEE IF THERE ARE ANY IRREGULARI-TIES THAT MIGHT EXPLAIN THIS?

I'M GOING DOWN THERE.

I TAKE IT THE MAIN ELEVATOR LINKS TO THIS SUB-BASEMENT?

THERE IS A *STANDARD* LOCK-OUT PREVENTING IT TRAVELING BELOW LEVEL SIXTEEN, BUT I CAN OVERRIDE THAT IF YOU REQUIRE ME TO.

IF YOU'D BE SO KIND.

level thirteen... level fourteen...

WE ARE ABOUT TO PASS LEVEL SIXTEEN INTO THE RESTRICTED ACCESS AREAS. I REGRET MY IMAGING SYSTEMS ARE NOT DESIGNED TO OPERATE BELOW LEVEL SIXTEEN.

SO?

SO... TO COIN A PHRASE, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN FROM HERE.

PLATO? PLATO?

TYPICAL *MALE*, VANISHES THE MOMENT HE MIGHT BE OF SOME *USE*...

CHK-TING!

sub-basement

elevator car occupants, please note - this is a restricted area. authorized persons only.

SHHHP-ISSS

LOOK UP "*AUTHORIZED*" IN THE DICTIONARY... YOU'LL FIND MY PICTURE NEXT TO IT.

SO JUST OPEN THIS *BLASTED* DOOR.

OBOY.

WHAT IS THIS?

global chronography analysis and control suite.

WHOOO-! THE QUESTION WAS RHETORICAL, BUT THANKS.

WHO ARE YOU ANYWAY?

you are speaking to the chronography suite's systems human interface system. you may call me virgil.

manual operation of the suite's systems can be selected if you desire.

VOICE IS FINE, THANKS.

SO --UH-- "VIRGIL"... YOU MUST BE RELATED TO PLATO AND HOMER, HUH? STARK SURE HAS A THING FOR THE CLASSICS.

THAT IS, I'M ASSUMING STARK CREATED YOU.

anthony stark was the original architect of my ancestral software. I am, more directly, the product of six generations of self-evolving computer industries.

my tachyon grid and the chronography manipulation technology was created by timely industries.

timely industries was founded by anthony stark in timely, wisconsin in 2009 ad.

NEVER HEARD OF THEM. ARE THEY A SUB-CONTRACTOR FOR STARK ENTERPRISES?

...WOOOOOHHH...

THIS MUST BE *NEXT WEEK.*

THAT'S THE ONLY *POSSIBLE* PLACE A PUNCH LIKE *THAT* COULD'VE THROWN ME.

NEXT WEEK. APPROXIMATELY, THE *MIDDLE* OF.

GOTTA FIND THE OTHERS. IF THEY'RE STILL ALIVE.

VOICE COMMAND! SWITCH TO SENSOR PACKAGE AND SNIFF FOR BODYHEAT IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY.

will assume scan parameters are not to include your bodyheat.

VERY CLEVER, SMART, ALEC--

WELL? ANYTHING?

WHAT THE--

HEY! HEY, KID! YOU *OKAY?*

to your left. four meters.

< HELP ME! HELP ME, PLEASE!>

second bodyheat contact behind you.

WHA--?

CANNON, WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO WORK ON YOUR *TIMING.*

DO *NOT* MOVE.

DROP YOUR GUN AND C--

--EH?

EEARGH!

OH MY GOD!

EEAARRGHHH!

BY THE SACRED STREAM!

THE BOY'S TURNING TOO FAST! THE RATE OF ACCELERATION MARKS HIM AS AN ALPHA-LEVEL CANDIDATE!

FNAKK!

NOT ONLY THAT, BUT HE'S A GREAT DISTRACTION!

GRRAAAAARRRH!

OKAY, BUDDY... COOL WINGS.

NOW LISTEN... I'M A FRIEND, COMPREHEND? I JUST SLUGGED THE BAD MAN... I'M ON YOUR SIDE...

WHOKK!

SLADE! WANDA! FOR PITY'S SAKE!

THERE ARE TOO MANY OF THEM!

AND ONLY ONE OF YOU, WHITE-EYES!

BY ANY RECKONING... THIS BATTLE IS DONE!

EARGHH!

TZZZZ

KHOOM!

BACK OFF! BACK OFF, YOU JACKALS!

BACK OFF, OR I'LL BURN YOU ALL!

UGHHH!

UNKH!

THAT'S IT... RUN!

SLADE! OH, THANK GOD!

I'M SORRY, JULIA... I AM *NOT* SLADE. SLADE WAS JUST PART OF MY *DISGUISE*, PART OF THE *CONCEALMENT* THE PRIESTS WOVE AROUND ME AS PROTECTION.

MY REAL NAME IS *GUSTAV BRANDT*. AND I HAVE BEEN SENT AS A *WARNING*, THOUGH IT MAY ALREADY BE *TOO LATE*.

TIME ITSELF HAS BEEN HARNESSED FOR DESTRUCTION. THE FUTURE HAS BEEN FORSAKEN AND LEFT TO *DIE*.

THE END OF *THIS WORLD* IS UPON US *ALL*.

NEXT:

TIME OUT OF MIND

FEATURING THE ULTIMATE BETRAYAL, THE BIG, BAD SECRET, THE FACE OF THE ENEMY...AND THE RETURN OF CENTURY!